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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: Debates before and after Paris

Republicans, Democrats both clash in same week

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

Sponsored by Fox Business News and The Wall Street Journal, the fourth set of Republican presidential debates took place Nov. 10 at the Milwaukee Theater in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. On Nov. 13, 130 were killed and hundreds were injured in a series of attacks on Paris. On Nov. 14, the Democratic candidates met for the second debate, this time at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, which was sponsored by CBS News, KCCI and The Des Moines Register. The difference between the questions featured in each debate was stark as most of the candidates didn't get a

chance to weigh in on the crisis on the debate stage due to the timing of the attacks.

This was just as well. At no point during the day on Nov. 13 did I think to myself, “I wonder what the presidential candidates think about all this?”

REPUBLICAN UNDERCARD

In a shake-up from last time, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham and former New York Gov. George Pataki joined former Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore in not making the cut for even the undercard debate. And New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee found themselves lowered from the prime-time stage. This left a pair of undercard veterans in former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum and Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, the latter of whom dropped out of the race Nov. 17. It’s clearly past time for the rest of these lower-tier candidates to follow suit.

Losers: All.

Highlight: None.

REPUBLICAN PRIME TIME

With the prime-time stage down to eight candidates, it’s hard to see what concessions were made by the networks to the campaigns since the CNBC debates. Though the complaints of Ohio Gov. John Kasich and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush that they weren’t getting enough time weren’t exactly

boosting their images. Instead, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina packed as much into her answers as possible. And as the front-runners, Donald Trump and Dr. Ben Carson seemed unconcerned with their time. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio also looked confident as he attacked Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul for being a “committed isolationist.”

Winners: Trump, Carson, Rubio, Fiorina, Cruz.

Losers: Bush, Kasich, Paul.

Highlight: Much like rappers, candidates such as Rubio and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz relentlessly self-promote, plugging their websites ad nauseum. Trump turned this on its head by insisting he didn’t need to give out a website.

DEMOCRATS

With their Twitter handles on the front of their podiums, the candidates were first asked about Paris. Apparently, the Sanders camp balked at this change in topic in light of current events. This was not a great look, but Sanders made the sound connection between climate change and the rise of terrorism. (The Department of Defense made a similar connection in a report released in July.) He also implored Middle Eastern Muslim nations to take on ISIS. Clinton was all too happy to talk about foreign policy, but refused to say the term “radical Islam.” After complaining about how much

time he had been given, O'Malley gave a forceful defense of Muslim Americans and called for taking in more refugees.

Winners: Sanders, Clinton.

Loser: O'Malley.

Highlight: I only saw Clinton flustered once. It was in response to Sanders' attack on her Wall Street backers. Recalling Pataki and Christie before her, she somehow connected this seemingly unrelated topic back to the coincidental official capacity she happened to hold on 9/11. "I represented New York," she said. "And I represented New York on 9/11 when we were attacked. Where were we attacked? We were attacked in downtown Manhattan where Wall Street is. I did spend a whole lot of time and effort helping them rebuild. That was good for New York. It was good for the economy. And it was a way to rebuke the terrorists who had attacked our country."

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